

Common Sense: Why You Need to Care About What Happens Next in Oregon

Watching the events unfold in Burns, Ore., I can only think that our Founding Fathers would be rolling over in their graves if they knew what had become of our nation.

For those of you not yet up to speed, The Conservative Treehouse has an excellent in-depth summary of the travesty that has taken place, and that continues to take place there. But if you want a really condensed Cliff's Notes version, here you go:

In an effort to draw attention to the arrest of a father-and-son pair of Oregon ranchers who are scheduled to begin a *second* five-year prison sentence (for committing the same "crime" they for which they have already served time), three brothers from the Cliven Bundy family and more than 100 armed militia—mostly U.S. military veterans—have taken control of the Malheur Wildlife Refuge headquarters, which had been closed for the New Year's holiday. They have announced they are prepared to stay there indefinitely.

Republican presidential candidates U.S. Sens. Ted Cruz (R-Texas) and Marco Rubio (R-Fla.) have already denounced the militia's actions and asked that they stand down. The ranchers on whose behalf they are engaged in this act of armed disobedience have also denounced the takeover of the federal facility.

So, the lamestream media has quickly painted the group as "kooks with guns," going so far as to label the militia as "Y'all Qaeda." And while I loathe to admit I agree with him, radio talk host Glenn Beck is absolutely right about how this is going to end.

Think Waco, Texas:

“Militia members, where do you think you’re going to end up? What do you think the end is going to look like?”

“Remember, Bill Clinton and Janet Reno set people on fire and the American people were okay with it. Why? Because they [the Branch Davidians] looked like crazy people with guns. Image is everything.”

I stand in absolute solidarity with the Hammond family from Oregon, just as I did with Bundy when the government overstepped its bounds in Nevada. I even support the idea behind what the militia is attempting to do now, just as I believe our forefathers would have.

The Framers fully understood the Calvinist view of the total depravity of man, and aimed to create competing interests—checks and balances—that would prevent one branch of the new government from superseding the interests of the other two. It also envisioned the People would never willfully allow themselves to be subjugated by a tyrant or an oligarchy.

Sadly, as James Madison’s Federalist No. 10 demonstrates, they got that part of the great experiment wrong. Mainly because they envisioned a world so deeply consumed by mass media, media convergence, and one “faction” dominating it all:

“There are again two methods of removing the causes of faction: the one, by destroying the liberty which is essential to its existence; the other, by giving to every citizen the same opinions, the same passions, and the same interests.

“It could never be more truly said than of the first remedy, that it was worse than the disease. Liberty is to faction what air is to fire, an aliment without which it instantly expires. But it could not be less folly to abolish liberty,

which is essential to political life, because it nourishes faction, than it would be to wish the annihilation of air, which is essential to animal life, because it imparts to fire its destructive agency.

“The second expedient is as impracticable as the first would be unwise. As long as the reason of man continues fallible, and he is at liberty to exercise it, different opinions will be formed. As long as the connection subsists between his reason and his self-love, his opinions and his passions will have a reciprocal influence on each other; and the former will be objects to which the latter will attach themselves.”

However, in the same article, Madison also perfectly describes why the folks out west are so upset in the first place. It all hinges on property rights and the government’s responsibility to protect—not trample—them:

“The diversity in the faculties of men, from which the rights of property originate, is not less an insuperable obstacle to a uniformity of interests. The protection of these faculties is the first object of government. From the protection of different and unequal faculties of acquiring property, the possession of different degrees and kinds of property immediately results; and from the influence of these on the sentiments and views of the respective proprietors, ensues a division of the society into different interests and parties.”

But now that government has been allowed to run amok, to gain more authority than it was ever intended to have—where an overwhelming majority of Americans are either too apathetic to care or too dependent upon government to seek a change in the status quo—how do you re-restrain government back to its original constitutional boundaries? Or, to use a more modern colloquialism: How do you put the toothpaste back in the tube?

Well, where the Framers fell a little short, the Founders had the solution, imperfect as it might be.

As cute as it might look on a Facebook or Instagram meme, Thomas Jefferson wasn't kidding when he wrote to James Madison:

"I hold it that a little rebellion now and then is a good thing, and as necessary in the political world as storms in the physical. Unsuccessful rebellions indeed generally establish the encroachments on the rights of the people which have produced them. An observation of this truth should render honest republican governors so mild in their punishment of rebellions, as not to discourage them too much. It is a medicine necessary for the sound health of government."

And, just in case you think perhaps the previous quote as lifted out of context, he later wrote the following to another colleague upon receipt of a copy of the Constitution of the United States:

"Wonderful is the effect of impudent and persevering lying. The British ministry have so long hired their gazetteers to repeat and model into every form lies about our being in anarchy, that the world has at length believed them, the English nation has believed them, the ministers themselves have come to believe them, and what is more wonderful, we have believed them ourselves."

"Yet where does this anarchy exist? Where did it ever exist, except in the single instance of Massachusetts? And can history produce an instance of a rebellion so honorably conducted? I say nothing of it's motives. They were founded in ignorance, not wickedness. God forbid we should ever be 20 years without such a rebellion."

"The people cannot be all, and always, well informed. The

part which is wrong will be discontented in proportion to the importance of the facts they misconceive. If they remain quiet under such misconceptions it is a lethargy, the forerunner of death to the public liberty. We have had 13 states independent 11 years.

“There has been one rebellion. That comes to one rebellion in a century and a half for each state. What country ever existed a century and a half without a rebellion? And what country can preserve it’s liberties if their rulers are not warned from time to time that their people preserve the spirit of resistance?

“Let them take arms. The remedy is to set them right as to facts, pardon and pacify them. What signify a few lives lost in a century or two? The tree of liberty must be refreshed from time to time with the blood of patriots and tyrants. It is it’s natural manure.”

There once, about 157 years ago, a group of men who decided to heed Jefferson’s advice. They took up arms in an attempt to right a grave injustice by government.

And while history reflects that John Brown’s raid on Harper’s Ferry, Va., was not successful in an immediate sense, it had a profound impact on our nation. In the midst of a “Second Great Awakening,” the brushfires of liberty were fanned again.

And, in the end, that grave wrong was righted.